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Local business owners pumped for RNC



The rally held by Democratic presidential nominee Barak Obama on Tuesday offered a taste of what downtown St. Paul will be like during the Republican National Convention.

It was crowded, but that's exactly what St. Paul wants when the convention comes to town in September.

The thousands of people who stood in lines outside the Xcel Energy Center also visited stores and restaurants before the Obama rally.

Cafe owners like Lisa Metwaly hope for a similar boost during the RNC.

"This is an opportunity of a lifetime!" she said. "Only the Olympics could make this happen to a city."

The busy streets hoped for in St. Paul will be a stark contrast to Boston in 2004 when it welcomed the Democratic National Convention.

St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman and Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak told the National Press in Washington D.C. recently that the Twin Cities will be open for business during the RNC.

"Don't leave town—pull up a lawn chair and watch democracy unfold in front of you," Coleman said.

The owner of the downtown St. Paul nightclub 'Camp,' hopes democracy unfolds at his place—where he's offering to rent his space to convention-goers.

"We're promoting the opportunity to put a tent behind the building and double the capacity of the space," said Bill Collins.

That's exactly what St. Paul and Minneapolis officials like to hear—businesses and residents embracing the convention.

"We want people to feel like this is their convention. Not necessarily because of the politics of it, but because this is democracy in action," Coleman said.

The RNC begins Sept. 1 and runs through the 4.